

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

At last, on the afternoon of Sunday, July 18, a messenger rode into Florence through the Porta San Piero Gattolino, bearing a branch of olive in his hand, bringing letters from the Pope and the ambassadors, announcing that the terms of peace were arranged. The olive was fastened up at a window of the Palazzo Vecchio, and the great bell of the tower pealed out over the city, summoning the citizens to a parliament. " O dearest children," wrote Catherine to Sano di Maco and her other disciples at Siena, " God has heard the cry and the voice of His servants, that for so long a time have cried out in His sight, and the wailing that for so long they have raised over their children dead. Now are they risen again : from death are they come to life, and from blindness to light. O dearest children, the lame walk, and the deaf hear, the blind eye sees, and the dumb speak, crying with loudest voice : *peace, peace, peace* ; with great gladness, seeing those children returning to the obedience and favour of their father, and their minds pacified. And, even as persons who now begin to see, they say : Thanks be to Thee, Lord, who hast reconciled us with our Holy Father. Now is the Lamb called holy, the sweet Christ on earth, where before he was called heretic and Patarin. Now do they accept him as father, where hitherto they rejected him. I wonder not thereat, for the cloud has passed away and the serene weather come. Rejoice, rejoice, dearest children, with a sweetest weeping of gratitude before the supreme and eternal Father; not calling yourselves contented with this, but praying Him soon to lift up the banner of the most holy Cross. Rejoice, exult in Christ sweet Jesus ; let our hearts burst at the sight of the largesse of the infinite goodness of God. Now is made the peace, in spite of those who would fain have prevented it. Defeated is the infernal demon."¹ The whole city was wild with joy. An exultant crowd filled the piazza, while the priors came out on to the ringhiera of tht

¹ Letter 303 (246). Catherine is writing on Sunday, July 18. Another messenger of peace had arrived on the previous evening : " Sabato sera giunse a un' ulivo a un' ora di notte ; e oggi a vespero giunse a un altro." Cf. Gi Capponi *op. cit.*, pp. 255, 256, and the *Anontmo Fiorentino*, pp. 365, 366.